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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5477

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S/S-O - PLEASE NOTIFY MADISON ADAMS - ARA/SC
E.O. 12065: GDS 5/23/96 (CHAPLIN, MAXWELL) OR-M
TAGS: OGEN, PGOV, MPOL, AR
SUBJECT: POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING ON ARGENTINA
REF: STATE 133641

1. S - ENTIRE TEXT

2. EMBASSY ENDORSES THE COURSE ADOPTED TO GUIDE CONDUCT OF OUR RELATIONS WITH ARGENTINA. IT SEEMS MOST LIKELY TO PRODUCE FAVORABLE RESULTS IN AREAS OF PRIME INTEREST TO USG. WE BELIEVE SOME ASSUMPTIONS MADE REGARDING TIMING OF VARIOUS ACTIVITIES COULD RESULT IN MISSING SOME OPPORTUNITIES, AND MAKE SUGGESTIONS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CURRENTLY FAVORABLE CONDITIONS.

3. REFTTEL STATES THAT IT WAS RECOGNIZED THAT DRAMATIC PROGRESS IS UNLIKELY BEFORE THE INAUGURATION OF THE NEW PRESIDENT. THE IMPLICATION IS THAT THE CURRENT LAME DUCK ADMINISTRATION IS UNLIKELY TO TAKE THOSE MEASURES ON THE ARGENTINE SIDE REQUIRED TO PERMIT RELATIONS TO IMPROVE, AND WILL BE DISTRACTED BY THE PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION. WE SHOULD NOT WAIT TO MOVE AHEAD HOPING FOR A MORE IDEAL TIME. IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE USG TO MOVE AHEAD IN 1991 WITH THOSE MEASURES ON OUR SIDE REQUIRED TO SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVE RELATIONS UNLESS THERE HAS BEEN AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF DEMONSTRATED ARGENTINE REFORM OF HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES. WE SHOULD NOT LOSE THE MOMENTUM OF THE GOODPASTER AND OTHER VISITS, ARGENTINE SUPPORT FOR US INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES, AND THE ARGENTINE EXPECTATIONS RAISED BY THESE EVENTS. THERE ARE ALSO SEVERAL RECENT DEVELOPMENTS WHICH SUGGEST THAT NOW IS THE TIME TO

Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP
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PSN:045037

PAGE 01

TOR:145/00:37Z

DTG:231906Z MAY 90

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SEEK AN UNDERSTANDING WITH THE GOA ON REFORMS.

4. A SECURITY FORCE OFFICER RECENTLY TOLD US HIS SERVICE NOW BELIEVES THE MONTONEROS ABROAD ARE ALL BUT FINISHED AS A SERIOUS TERRORIST THREAT. RECENTLY THEY HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO FIND VOLUNTEERS FOR TERRORIST MISSIONS TO ARGENTINA, AND HAD TO RESORT TO KEEPING AN EARLIER VOLUNTEER'S FAMILY HOSTAGE ABROAD TO GUARANTEE HE WOULD NOT DEFECT UPON ARRIVAL IN ARGENTINA. WE NOTE THAT THE NEW RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR THE SECURITY FORCES (WHICH PROHIBIT DISAPPEARANCES EXCEPT IN THE CASE OF CURRENT ACTIVE TERRORISTS) ARE BEING ENFORCED. THERE ARE EXTENDED MEETINGS GOING ON WITHIN THE MILITARY WHOSE OBJECT IS TO MAKE SOME DECISIONS ON HOW TO REDUCE THE PEN PRISONER POPULATION SIGNIFICANTLY, AND A NEW LAW AIMED AT IMPROVING TREATMENT OF PRISONERS HAS REPORTEDLY BEEN SIGNED BY THE PRESIDENT AND MAY BE PROMULGATED SOON. THESE EVENTS SUGGEST THAT THE GOA'S PERCEPTION OF THE TERRORIST THREAT SHOULD BE DECLINING, AND THAT THE GOA IS TAKING, OR TRYING TO TAKE, REMEDIAL MEASURES FOR PRISONERS. IT APPEARS THESE STEPS ARE BEING TAKEN DESPITE SOME STRAINS WITHIN THE MILITARY COMMUNITY. IF THIS IS THE CASE, CONDITIONS WOULD SEEM PARTICULARLY FAVORABLE FOR MOVING AHEAD ON AN UNDERSTANDING WITH THE GOA ON AREAS OF CONCERN TO US, NOTWITHSTANDING THE DISTRACTIONS OF THE PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION.

5. WE BELIEVE THE AMBASSADOR SHOULD BE AUTHORIZED IMMEDIATELY UPON HIS RETURN TO EXPLORE WITH PRESIDENT VIDELA AND GENERALS VIOLA AND GALTIERI THE PROSPECTS FOR WORKING OUT FEASIBLE, SPECIFIC HUMAN RIGHTS IMPROVEMENTS, INCLUDING AN ATTEMPT AT THE SENSITIVE ISSUE OF WHAT INFORMATION THERE IS ON THE FATE OF DISAPPEARED PERSONS THAT MIGHT BE PROVIDED THROUGH SOME INTERMEDIARY. (BECAUSE OF ITS EXTREME SENSITIVITY FOR THE MILITARY, PROGRESS ON THIS LAST ISSUE SHOULD NOT BECOME A CENTRAL CONDITION FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS.) THE AMBASSADOR SHOULD BE AUTHORIZED TO WORK OUT A COMPREHENSIVE UNDERSTANDING ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES. HE SHOULD BE AUTHORIZED FOR EXAMPLE, TO OFFER A LOWER US PROFILE AT THE UNHRC AND OAS DEPENDING ON CONTINUED HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS AND NO SIGNIFICANT REVERSALS. THE AMBASSADOR SHOULD BE AUTHORIZED TO EXPRESS THE INTENT OF THE US EXECUTIVE TO REVIEW ITS VOTING POLICY WITH RESPECT TO IFI LOANS AND TO PROPOSE THAT THE CONGRESS REVOKE OR MODIFY THE HUMPHREY-KENNEDY AMENDMENT--DEPENDING ON PROMPT PROGRESS IN REDUCING THE PEN PRISONER POPULATION TO AN ABSOLUTE

Declassified Case: NW 57067 Date: 06-07-2013

PSN:045037

PAGE 02

TOR:145/00:37Z

DTG:231906Z MAY 80

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MINIMUM, EXERCISING RESTRAINT ON POLITICAL ARRESTS, AND ZERO DISAPPEARANCES. SHOULD THE AMBASSADOR'S CONSULTATIONS GO WELL, THE DECISION COULD THEN BE MADE WHETHER TO PROCEED WITH OTHER INCENTIVES, SUCH AS VISITS.

6. IF THESE DISCUSSIONS ARE NOT PRODUCTIVE, WE HAVE LOST NOTHING, BECAUSE PERFORMANCE ON THE US SIDE IS CONDITIONAL ON ARGENTINE PERFORMANCE. WE WILL ALSO HAVE SET THE STAGE FOR A RENEWED ATTEMPT AFTER THE SEPTEMBER DECISION ON THE NEW PRESIDENT OR THE MARCH CHANGE OF ADMINISTRATIONS.

CHAPLIN

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Declassified Case: 17X- 57067 Date: 06-07-2013

PSN:045037 PAGE 03 OF 03 TOR:145/00:37Z DTG:231926Z MAY 80

NW 57067 DocId:33069229 Page 3

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